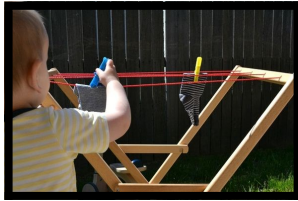


How to support mark making and writing at home



The building blocks for writing are physical development and in particular the development of gross (large) motor and fine (small) motor skills. Before a child can hold a pencil, they need to develop strength and control in their arms and upper bodies and gain control of larger movements, before they are able to demonstrate control over their hands, smaller movements and be able to hold mark making implements.

They also need to have developed self-confidence and the ability to persevere to attempt this new skill.

Therefore, it is extremely important to provide young children with a wide range of physical experiences, in order for them to develop and practise the skills they will need to be able to make marks.

Ideas you could try at home-

- Encourage the children to spend lots of time outdoors, running, jumping, crawling and climbing.
- Throwing and catching balls and bean bags.
- Dancing and movement activities.
- Action rhymes and songs– Especially those that involve the children using and manipulating their fingers, such as 'Tommy Thumb' or '1,2,3,4,5 once I caught a fish alive.'
- Painting on different scales. Can you use large fence brushes outside to paint with water? Make marks with medium brushes on a large sheet of paper? Think about providing the children with opportunities to work at different heights. E.g. on the floor, at an easel, on a table, etc.
- Mixing and stirring with various sized spoons.
- Digging with spades in sand or mud.
- Lifting heavy objects such as buckets filled with sand or pushing wheelbarrows or wheeled toys.
- Shaking, tapping, beating musical instruments.
- Squeezing out sponges in the bath or while doing the washing up.
- Encourage different ways of manipulating playdough, including rolling, patting, squeezing, moulding, etc.
- Threading activities– start big and get smaller!
- Exploring with tools such as tweezers, scissors, hammers, screwdrivers, tongs, knives to cut food, etc.
- Develop finger strength by using pegs to help to put the washing on the line.



How to support mark making and writing at home



Drawings are an extremely important part of children's development and are often one of the earliest forms of communication children use to share their thoughts and ideas.

Drawing helps to develop and enhance children's motor skills and build finger muscles, as well as allowing them to explore pencil grip and develop control over mark making implements.

Through drawing, children will explore with and imitate shapes, such as circles and lines, that can be used to form letters.

Children being able to talk about their drawings and give meaning to the marks they make is another vital part of children's writing journey.

Even if you can't tell what it is, ask the children about their picture and encourage them to tell you about what they have drawn.

Children need to gain confidence when beginning to create marks on paper. It is important that all of their attempts to write are encouraged by adults and in the early stages, even if this may look like a scribble!



Ideas you could try at home-

- Discover and experiment with objects that make marks— why not try leaves, sticks, feathers, even your own fingers!
- Discover and experiment with materials you can make marks in such as sand, mud, foam, cornflour, paint, etc.
- Draw on the pavement outside with water or chalks.
- Draw collaboratively on a large piece or roll of paper rather than individual pictures .
- Comment on the shapes you can see in your child's picture.
- Model drawing— circles, lines, etc.
- Encourage the children to look in a mirror to create representations of themselves.
- Encourage the children to look carefully at objects and create some observational drawings.
- Help to develop children's control by creating shadows with objects, and encourage them to follow the lines they make.



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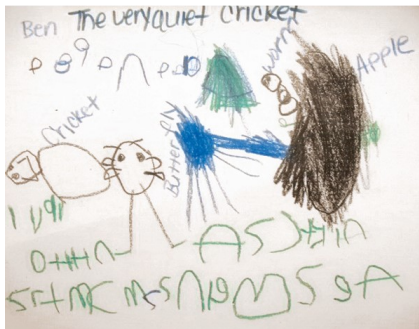


Writing opportunities we provide for children should always be purposeful, interesting and enjoyable.

Mark making is often more successful when children make marks as part of their play rather than as a separate activity. By doing this we create a context and purpose for the child to make marks.

Ideas you could try at home-

- Encourage the children to help you to create a list for the things you need to buy at the shops. Model the writing process of a list and talk about the letters you are writing. Allow the children to take the list to the shop and mark off the list as it goes in the Trolley.
- Labels- Encourage children to write labels for things and people. Can they label their work with some of the letters from their name?
- Create badges and stickers.
- Make tickets for role play games, such as tickets for a train or bus journey.
- Encourage mark making to record in games, e.g. scores, tally charts, etc.
- Write letters and cards to send to friends and family. Talk about the process of addressing letters and taking it to the post box.
- Think about where children like to mark make. Use clip boards, chalks, etc. to support mark making outdoors.
- Create more informal areas to mark make rather than at a table.



Ideas you could try at home-

- Point out words and letters to the children in books and stories you share together.
- Look at and talk about signs and logos that you see in the environment.
- Do some cooking following a recipe, demonstrating to the children how written text is used for information.
- Allow children to experience various forms of communications, both handwritten and electronic, such as emails, text messages, letters, etc.



To encourage children to become 'writers' it is important that they are exposed to text and writing in their everyday lives.

It is also important for children to see adults modelling writing. Children who see adults writing shopping lists, filling in forms and addressing letters, etc. will begin to recognise that writing is used for a purpose and a form of communication.

How to support mark making and writing at home



Many parents believe that writing your name is an important skill that children need to be able to master before starting school. Although their name is one of the first words that a child learns to write, there is lots of pre-work that must be done in order for them to really understand the process of writing their name, as appose to it just being a learnt skill that they are unable to transfer to the writing of other words.

Before children begin to be able to write their name, they must be able to recognise and talk about the shapes of the letters that make up their name.

Writing does not need to be on paper to be worthwhile and it is often better for their confidence to start encouraging them to form the shapes of letters in less permanent ways such as the air, using their finger to trace through materials or using a paintbrush with water.

During their writing it is important for children to make the connection between the letter they are writing and the letter sound. Children need to be able to discriminate between different letter sounds, to support them to write new words and break down words as they begin to read.

Children need to be developmentally ready to start writing their name. If children are pressured to 'write' too soon, when they are not ready to do so, we risk removing the enjoyment and give children a negative impression of the writing process.

Therefore the opportunities for children to explore name writing must be developmentally appropriate, purposeful and fun.



Ideas you could try at home-

- Write names in birthday cards to send to family and friends or writing your name at the bottom of a letter.
- Using names to label pictures and drawings.
- Taking orders for role play cafes, using names of friends and family.
- As the children are writing letters, comment on the letter sound to help them make a connection between the written letter and the sound they make. Use the sounds the letters make, not the letter name.
- Use 'Hairy letters' on an I pad or tablet to support letter formation and hear letter sounds.
- Initially, start with encouraging the children to write the initial letter of their name and build this up over time.
- Write names for them to copy underneath rather than tracing over your writing.
- Talk about the formation of the letters. E.g. 'n looks like a tunnel'
- Point out letters from the child's name within the environment.
- Use the correct upper and lower case when modelling writing their name.